

STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION ON COVID-19 PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

The mission of the American Diabetes Association® (ADA) is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes—including children and adolescents who spend many of their waking hours at school. The ADA's Safe at School® campaign is devoted to keeping students with diabetes safe and healthy at school and making sure these students are treated fairly. Safe at School® achieves this goal through the development of resources and guidelines aligning with federal and state legal protections for students with diabetes, offering assistance and self-advocacy tools to families, pursuing policy change when needed, and promoting best practices. Students with diabetes are entitled to a safe and healthy learning environment without the fear of increasing the severity of illness due to COVID-19.

- As students with diabetes return to the classroom during a global pandemic with a resurgent Delta variant and potential resurgent Omicron variant, the ADA urges schools to adhere to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) COVID-19 guidelines for K–12 schools](#) which are echoed by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). The CDC recommends [everyone ages 5 and older get a COVID-19 vaccine](#) to help protect against COVID-19.

The key COVID-19 prevention strategies for schools according to the CDC are:

- **Vaccination.** Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
- **Masking.** Due to the prevalent and highly contagious Delta variant, the CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K–12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
- **Distancing.** In addition to universal indoor masking, the CDC recommends schools maintain at least three feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least three feet, such as when schools cannot fully reopen while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple prevention strategies, such as screening testing.
- **Other measures.** Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing, respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- **Stay home when sick.** Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their health care provider for testing and care.
- **Use layered prevention strategies.** Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., screening testing, ventilation, handwashing, respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick) to protect

students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households to support in-person learning.

- **Local decision-making authority.** Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

According to the CDC, patients with diabetes are at higher risk for severe illness if they are infected by COVID-19. The ADA strongly urges all schools to implement the CDC's prevention strategies to protect students with diabetes and other chronic illnesses.

While students returning to their brick-and-mortar schools is best for their mental and emotional health, returning children to the classroom without a mask mandate or the implementation of other prevention strategies, places the health of children and the adults around them in peril. This is of critical importance, given the increasing prevalence of the Delta variant that has proven to be more infectious and virulent and has led to a dramatic rise of hospitalizations of younger individuals.

In addition, layered prevention strategies reduce the likelihood that students will be absent from class or miss extracurricular activities due to COVID-19 infection or the necessity to quarantine exposed students.

The ADA urges all schools to adopt the CDC's COVID-19 prevention strategies to ensure students with diabetes, their classmates, teachers, and staff are safe and healthy at school and that all students are optimally positioned to learn.

Safe at School[®] resources and information are available [here](#).

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